

Bi-Pedaling It

In my younger years (20+ years ago!) I had become an avid cyclist for a duration of about 2 or 3 years. Living at home with time on my hands and a need to do something, I started walking one day around our country 'block', and quickly moved to biking to be able to travel farther and see more than you do from a car window as you pass by. I worked my way up to regular rides with the [Tri-County Bicycling Association](http://www.biketcba.org) (www.biketcba.org) and an actual tour through the northwest lower peninsula.



Time moved on through college and to a job. My first job with the state landed me in Lansing, and in good weather I would commute from my apartment in East Lansing. As time and the job moved and my life changed, 'free' time became more fleeting, and other factors contributed to less riding over the next years until I basically quit riding altogether. Only very occasionally did I take or get the chance to bike again.

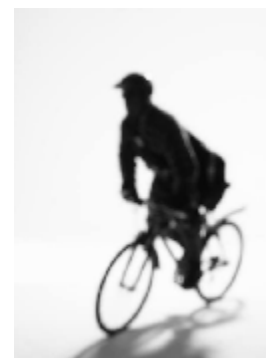
Life went on, and in 1996 my family doctor detected a slight heart murmur. A congenital defect slowly turned into a mitral valve prolapse, which began to significantly affect my quality of life. In 2004 it was necessary for open heart corrective surgery, and thus began regular visits to the cardiologist for life.

Being treated as though I had heart disease meant life changes were necessary to continue in good health. I needed to lose some weight (which came naturally after the surgery, but needed maintenance) and lower my cholesterol, which I was able to do without medication - through a combination of dietary changes and exercise. My wife and I are now on a lower fat diet, and I try to walk more. I had to walk for my recovery period after surgery, so extending that came naturally of habit. It really requires nothing special other than decent shoes and some time. OK, and motivation - sometimes just getting up & started is hardest. **I still try to take the opportunity to walk on breaks or during lunch at work, as do many other employees. A brisk walk for 15 minutes can especially help those of us with more sedentary jobs (increased heart rate and blood flow), and can aid in invigorating yourself and recharging your batteries!**



For the majority of my work with the State of Michigan, I have been living about 2 miles from work. Parking issues for me changed over the years, both for better and for worse at times. Looking back, I can't believe I hadn't done more for alternative transportation.

Recent years have tightened economically, and the forefront of global warming hit home. The [Smart Commute Challenge](#) seemed to call to me -- economically, as a some-time kind-of environmentalist-type-leaning--person, and as another exercise opportunity for my heart/health. I participated as an individual. I cycle to work on average only two or three work days a week between 'snow melt and snow fly' - for various reasons. I'm fortunate in that the timing isn't all that different from driving. I have been known to walk to work on a rare occasion, however. The Smart Commute Challenge has gained much for me - it's good for my continued health, my well-being and outlook is changed for the better by it, and I'm not taxing my wallet, car, or environment as much with those short city drives. I get more enjoyment out of my commute - you experience and have time to notice so much more with all your senses more exposed to the world around you.



Help yourself and help your world in so many ways - explore alternative transportation!

Submitted by Dennis Kelley, Michigan Department of Transportation